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MEMORANDUM

NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL

INFORMATION

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January 26, 1971

Partially declassified, Release to 12/22/92 of Presidential Records of the Nixon Administration by C. Seeley National Security Council

MEMORANDUM FOR: THE FILES

SUBJECT: Vietnam Ad Hoc Working Group Meeting, January 15, 1971

Ambassador Sullivan opened the meeting by asking if Secretary Laird had yet prepared a full report on his recent trip to Southeast Asia. The Defense representative replied that the Secretary had not even returned to the United States and would undoubtedly want to see the President before making available any kind of report on his trip. Sullivan then noted that Economy Minister Ngoc's recent speech on GVN war costs in Cambodia had created a mild sensation in the press. He said that he planned to cable our Embassy in Saigon asking for details. (The Embassy has since replied that Ngoc's comments were not unreasonable; the UPI reporter had misinterpreted them and subsequent stories were based on UPI's misinformation.)

Sullivan announced that State had received a White House directive ordering that nothing more was to be said about U.S. air activity in Cambodia. He asked if other departments and agencies had received the same directive and he was told that they had. The Defense representative said that this directive was probably generated by some unfortunate remarks to the press at a routine DOD news conference.

Sullivan announced that State was in favor of holding the next Troop Contributing Countries (TCC) meeting here in Washington on April 23. He said that he had asked Dr. Kissinger about the idea in San Clemente and that Dr. Kissinger foresaw no particular problems. Sullivan said, however, that he would be sending a formal memorandum on the subject to Dr. Kissinger as well as an outgoing cable for clearance. He said that the Thai, Australians and Koreans would want to be making announcements regarding their own troop withdrawals shortly after the TCC meeting, probably on April 24.

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Sullivan asked the committee how the disposal of excess government property was being handled in Vietnam (i.e., by MACV, AID, or a mission committee). He said that Senator Proxmire had expressed an interest in this subject, and had asked State for a description of the process. Sullivan felt that Proxmire was probably trying to prove that such excess property was a form of aid and that the State Department would legally be in charge of such transactions. He said that he would contact Saigon for the facts.

Sullivan then raised the POW issue. He noted that Hanoi had refused to accept the updated list of U.S. POW's from the U.S. delegation at the Paris session on January 14, as well as the list of the sick and wounded NVA POW's which the GVN would soon release. Sullivan also noted that the GVN had asked the other side for a standdown in military activities in the DMZ corridor, and he felt that this was wise. He asked that a JCS message be sent to all allied units which announced the date and area of the POW release, so as to insure against any confusion on this point. Sullivan also announced that the Lon Nol Government planned to offer the release of 17 NVA POW's now in its possession in exchange for the 17 journalists who are still missing in Cambodia. He felt that the Communists would not respond but that nevertheless it was a worthwhile gambit. Sullivan then raised the possibility that the other side might soon sharpen its position on the POW issue. He referred to a recent Indonesian report which claimed that Hanoi would release U.S. POW's within 24 hours after the U.S. announced the date for a complete troop withdrawal. Although the source of the report is questionable, Sullivan noted that at the January 14 Paris session the PRG representative had declared that U.S. POW's would be released "as soon as possible" after the U.S. withdrawal date had been announced. Sullivan wondered whether the other side might not soon become even more categoric, and if this would not be a problem for us.

Sullivan announced that the Ad Hoc Committee would soon forward a memorandum to Dr. Kissinger recommending that a NSDM need not be issued for the Vietnam Training Center. He noted that the Center's original charter had called for the creation of an Interagency Guidance Group, and he felt that a revived Interagency Committee should be able to handle the Center's problems.

Sullivan announced that Dr. Kissinger had responded to the Ad Hoc Committee's recent paper on anti-Americanism by asking for a

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progress report. He said that he would cable Saigon for developments.

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Sullivan said that the New York Times had called him on January 14, asking about Sir Robert Thompson's forthcoming survey of the South Vietnamese police. Sullivan gave the Times no comment, but from the conversation he was sure that the Times had a good deal of information and would print a story. (It did.) The group then discussed press leaks in general and concluded that once information was widely disseminated in a non-sensitive cable (as was Thompson's mission) there was little hope of ever finding the source.